

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE
BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND
WILDLIFE**

NEITHER FOR NOR AGAINST

L.D. 320

LD 320 “AN ACT REGARDING RETRIEVING WOUNDED BEAR”

Presented by: Representative: Black of Wilton.

Cosponsored by: Senator Davis of Piscataquis, Saviello of Franklin,
Representatives: Crafts of Lisbon, Greenwood of Wales,
Hanley of Pittston, Long of Sherman, Shaw of Standish,
Timberlake of Turner, Wood of Sabattus

DATE OF HEARING: March 5, 2015

Good afternoon Senator Davis, Representative Shaw and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Major Chris Cloutier, of the Maine Warden Service representing the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department, neither for nor against **L.D. 320**.

The Department currently issues Leashed Dog Tracking Licenses, (LDTL) for guides and for hunters who possess a valid hunting license, to track wounded deer, bear, and moose with a leashed dog. Hunters who are not guides must successfully pass a written exam in order to receive the license. Guides are not required to take the exam. We currently have 25 license holders. Holders of the license and the hunter who wounded the deer, bear, or moose must follow very specific conditions within Department rule when tracking deer, bear, and moose. Some of the conditions include: the requirement that the hunter dispatch the animal during legal hunting hours, the requirement that the guide dispatch the animal outside of legal hunting hours, the requirement to notify the nearest available law enforcement officer assigned to the area prior to tracking, using a lead attached to the dog which is at least 12 feet in length, and several others.

This bill proposes to allow guides to be exempted from having to pay for the LDTL so that they can use one leashed dog outside of legal hunting hours to track and dispatch a bear wounded by the guide's client.

Currently, if a guide who does not possess a valid license to use a leashed dog for tracking, is unable to contact a person licensed to track wounded game, they may contact a game warden and receive permission to use a leashed dog. This helps to ensure compliance with all applicable laws.

By adding the following language, “A person licensed to guide hunters may use one leashed dog outside of legal hunting hours to track and dispatch a bear wounded by the guide’s client.” it could allow guides who are not in possession of the LDTL to operate outside of the Department’s rules which have been in place for the last fifteen years. If this proposal is supported by the Committee we would suggest that the language have more specific requirements which include: the guide must follow the Commissioner’s rules governing the LDTL, the guide may only use a leashed dog for tracking a wounded bear if the hunt was conducted over bait, and the guide must provide notification to a game warden prior to commencing the track. We ask for these specific requirements to be placed in statute to avoid a potential night hunting scenario.

We can provide a current copy of the Department’s LDTL Rules for the work session if necessary.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.